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# The American Scholar of the Twentieth Century

An Address Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society  
of the Northwestern University

By

William Morton Payne, LL. D.



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THE INTERNATIONAL QUARTERLY,  
542 Fifth Avenue, New York City,  
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## THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

IN THE approach to my discussion of the present position of the American scholar, his opportunities and responsibilities, I do not wish to recall the fabled German professor who began his account of the Protestant Reformation with the creation of the world, or even the very modern instance of the southern statesman who found it necessary to base his argument for a Nicaraguan canal upon the Spanish conquest of America and the depressing influence of the Inquisition upon the native races of the western continent. Nevertheless, a reference to Benjamin Franklin is what first comes to my mind, prompted by the vague reminiscence of having read, sometime in childhood, an account of how our shrewd eighteenth century philosopher, beginning life as a tallow-chandler's apprentice, raised himself by his own unaided efforts to a commanding rank among his fellow men, and eventually,—for this was the impressive moral of the story,—was enabled to “stand before kings.” To the childish sense, this may seem a very imposing reward of ambition, but the maturer intelligence takes greater satisfaction in Turgot's famous epigrammatic characterization, “He snatched the thunder from heaven, and the sceptre from tyrants.” Kings impress our imagination when we are young, but somehow they lose their glamor when we grow up, and learn, among other things, that they wear clothes like our own, and a high hat more frequently than a crown.

We Americans, particularly, whose lives are consecrated to the ideal of democracy, are not likely to be overawed by any trappings of royalty, except in those tender years during which our individual development epitomizes the racial experience which we inherit. It has even been hinted, on the contrary, that we are apt to be over scornful of the outworn past, and unduly assertive of our own superiority over the effete older world, with its life of tradition and prescription. I have heard a story of Charles Sumner to the effect that once when traveling in England, his consequential manner and air of importance so impressed observers that one of them, curious to learn what manner of personage he might be, and of what exalted rank, ventured to put the question directly to him. “Sir,” was the reply, “I am an American sovereign.” The statement was conclusive, and, if the story be not apocryphal,



Sumner's way of making it is likely to have been such as to discourage further inquiries.

American sovereigns were created in such numbers by the American Revolution that it could not seem so great a thing for Franklin, or another, to "stand before kings" unabashed by their artificial magnificence. As the result of that momentous happening, the individual acquired a new dignity, and the simple virtues of upright manhood came to be held a more important possession than quarterings or pedigrees. But there is a royalty of a different sort to which tribute may be paid by the most democratically minded without any loss of self-respect. It is the royalty that holds sway over the kingdoms of the intellect, and exacts a homage that we willingly bestow. So our American revolt was declared against Tory ministers and Hanoverian kings, but by no means against the spiritual rule of Shakespeare and Milton, which we continued gladly and reverently to acknowledge. Yet it must be confessed that, with political independence achieved, our nation remained unduly subservient to the literature and the scholarship of our mother country. It was one thing to give unqualified allegiance to the great poets and thinkers whose fame was the inheritance of Americans no less than of Englishmen; it was quite another thing to look across the seas for every fresh inspiration, to be doubtful of our own powers and self-deprecatory in all matters of intellectual achievement, to remain uncertain concerning the value of our own work until it had received the seal of transatlantic approval. One cannot read very far in the literature produced by the first half century of our national life without discovering this to have been the prevailing attitude, and the more widely we extend the inquiry the deeper becomes this impression. As Professor Lounsbury says, "It requires a painful and penitential examination of the reviews of the period to comprehend the utter abasement of mind with which the men of that day accepted the foreign estimate upon works written here, which had been read by themselves, but which it was clear had not been read by the critics whose opinions they echoed." What was thus true in the field of literary criticism was true in almost equal measure in the field of scholarship, and it was evident that our political emancipation had still left us intellectually in leading strings. One lesson of national self-reliance we had already learned; another lesson, possibly the more important of the two, remained thus far unmastered, and almost unattempted.

That lesson was to be enforced by the man whose life and teachings we have recently been commemorating in this the centenary anniversary of his birth. Many tongues and pens have united in paying tribute to Ralph Waldo Emerson during the past months, but the sum of our obli-

gation to his memory has hardly yet been computed. It is comparatively easy to reckon up the influence of a thinker who has made definite contributions to the totality of human knowledge, or who has propounded some new thesis of vital importance, and won for it the acceptance of the judicious by force of logical presentation and persistent championship. We know pretty definitely what the world owes to such men as Adam Smith and Immanuel Kant and Charles Darwin. Their intellectual force is applied externally, so to speak, and its resultant is measurable. But Emerson was a thinker of different type, a philosopher whose principles defy formulation, and whose ideas have neither logical development nor systematic arrangement. He was the preacher of a gospel, not the defender of a creed, and no hobgoblin consistency was permitted to perturb his inspired musings. His influence was exerted upon the mind not externally, but from within outwards, and its aim was a sort of spiritual regeneration rather than the modification of any particular idea or set of ideas. As he once said, "It is of little moment that one or two or twenty errors of our social system be corrected, but of much that man be in his senses." It was said with pregnant significance by Goethe, the greatest among all of the moderns of this type of intellect, that "inner freedom" was the thing which men should, above all things else, strive to attain; that he felt it his chief title to the world's regard that his writings had been helpful in this direction. It will ever be the glory of Emerson that he aided many thousands of his fellow countrymen to win this, the most precious of all spiritual possessions. By treating idealism as the natural atmosphere of the free soul, he responded to the deepest instincts of our nature, for all the encroachments of materialism upon American life cannot wholly conceal the fact that this nation was founded upon idealism, political, ethical, and religious, and that it still believes in the sunlit peaks, however they may be obscured by the sullen vapors of these lower slopes upon which we grope from day to day. The time came, long before Emerson's own death, when his gospel bore its proper fruit, when his idealism became translated into action, and when it was seen, as Mr. Morley finely says, that his "teaching had been one of the forces that, like central fire in men's minds, nourished the heroism of the North in its immortal battle." Thus was Emerson's faith in the individual justified, and thus it will be justified many times over, if we give heed to his counsel. That "the kingdom of God is within you" is a worthy and a memorable saying of old. "All deep souls see into that," to use a phrase from Carlyle, and the truth has been reiterated from age to age by the wisest among men. The most insistent spokesman of individualism in our own day is



Henrik Ibsen, and his way of putting the matter is this: "Men still call for special revolutions, for revolutions in politics, in externals. But all that sort of thing is trumpery. It is the human soul that must revolt." If we give this truth its rightful meaning, not misinterpreting it as an excuse for quietism, nor ourselves withdrawing from the arena under its shelter, we shall find it to be the very essence of every philosophy of reform, the prerequisite of every effective effort for the regeneration of our social life.

At the close of the summer of 1787, the Fathers of the Republic were completing their arduous task of shaping that instrument of government which we call the Constitution of the United States, and which we hold in veneration as the fundamental law of a free commonwealth based upon the principle of self-government. Thus did our ancestors give lasting political effect to the ideas of the Declaration of Independence. Exactly half a century later, on the closing day of the summer of 1837, Ralph Waldo Emerson, then thirty-four years of age, addressed the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard College in words that burned themselves upon the minds of his hearers, and marked an epoch in the history of American thought. His theme was "The American Scholar," and his utterance has, by common consent, come to be known as our intellectual Declaration of Independence. The young men who heard this address, says Dr. Holmes, "Went out from it as if a prophet had been proclaiming to them, 'Thus saith the Lord!'" From the very first paragraph, the address was a clarion call to the onset in our warfare of the spirit, a prophetic pæan sublimely confident of the intellectual victories that our future must have in store. "Perhaps the time is already come," said the young speaker, "when the sluggish intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids, and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill. Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life, cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. Events, actions arise that must be sung, that will sing themselves. Who can doubt that poetry will revive and lead in a new age, as the star in the constellation Harp, which now flames in our zenith, shall one day be the pole star for a thousand years?"

Let us pause for a moment to consider the leading ideas of this address, noting, in the first place, that Emerson is here more systematic than was his wont in after life, and that the address is constructed upon a definite intellectual plan. Beginning with the famous definition of the



scholar as "man thinking," as the "delegated intellect" in the social distribution of human functions, the essay goes on to discuss the attitude of the scholar toward the main influences that direct and shape his thought. "The education of the scholar by nature, by books, and by action,"—such is the tripartite scheme of the first half of the argument. Nature is with him always, and "he must settle its value in his mind." The tendency to classify her phenomena is instinctive, and leads through gradual steps to the final synthesis in which nature and the soul are seen to be complementary, and the modern precept to study nature becomes one with the ancient exhortation to the most complete self-knowledge. Turning from nature to books, the essay admits the value of their influence, but sounds a note of warning against over-dependence upon them, lest "men thinking" become no more than bookworms. "I had better never see a book than be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system." The influence of books must be "sternly subordinated to be free impulses of the active soul." Kept thus within their sphere, they are helpful and stimulating. "The discerning will read, in his Plato or Shakespeare, only that least part,—only the authentic utterances of the oracle, all the rest he rejects, were it never so many times Plato's and Shakespeare's." Thus viewed, reading becomes creation, and the reader remains in possession of his own soul. Next comes action, for it is by action that the soul really grows in stature. "The true scholar judges every opportunity of action past by, as a loss of power. It is the raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products."

Thus far the essay is concerned with the scholar's education; the theme of the following section is found in a consideration of his duties. These "may all be comprised in self-trust," for the scholar must be both "free and brave." Such "being his functions, it becomes him to feel all confidence in himself, and to defer never to the popular cry. He and he only knows the world." "Let him not quit his belief that a popgun is a popgun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom." In patience, in sincerity with himself, and in complete self-reliance, the scholar bides his hour, and his brief existence compasses all the eternities. "The unstable estimates of men crowd to him whose mind is filled with a truth as the heaped waves of the Atlantic follow the moon." The man who is thus self-centred and self-trustful may "stand before kings" in the spiritual realm, for he is rightfully of their company. This sovereignty of the mind outranks all dynastic eminences, and is independent of all the forms of adventitious circumstance. "They are the kings of the world who give the color of

their present thought to all nature and all art, and persuade men by the cheerful serenity of their carrying the matter, that this thing which they do is the apple which the ages have desired to pluck, now at last ripe, and inviting nations to the harvest."

Finally, the essay proceeds to make its application of the principles discussed to American conditions as Emerson views them. He finds the age to be critical and discontented, its spokesmen uncertain concerning the past and hesitant in their attitude toward the future. But here is no cause for despondency; rather is there reason for exultation over the new vistas that open before the mind. "If there is any period one would desire to be born in, is it not the age of revolution; when the old and the new stand side by side, and admit of being compared; when the energies of all men are searched by fear and by hope; when the historic glories of the old can be compensated by the rich possibilities of the new era?" Reading the "signs of the coming days," the philosopher finds two of noteworthy import. The first is the entrance of democracy into literature, as illustrated by Goethe, Wordsworth, and Carlyle, with its fresh recognition of the common, the familiar, and the low. "Man is surprised to find that things near are not less beautiful and wondrous than things remote." The other sign is "the new importance given to the single person." For "if the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him." And thus we reach those famous words which are the very essence of this declaration of our intellectual independence. "This confidence in the unsearched might of man belongs by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American scholar. We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame." But henceforth, "please God, we will walk on our feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men."

Exactly two generations have passed by since these burning words fired the American spirit to a new and lofty purpose. It has seemed to me fitting, in this secular year of Emerson's birth, thus to recall his most pregnant message, and to inquire, such being the teaching inculcated upon our grandsires, what their grandsons should make of it, and in what spirit they should apply it to this new age in which we live. In its fundamental ideas, the teaching is no less vital today than it was when first delivered, for it rests upon the enduring principles of human nature, upon a rational interpretation of the relations between life and thought.



But, as Lowell reminded us long ago, "new occasions teach new duties," and it may well be that a somewhat different envisagement of the attitude of "man thinking" toward his fellow men will be found desirable in our own day and generation.

It is with this thought in mind that the subject of the present essay has been chosen, and that I invite the attention of my readers to a consideration of the duties of the American scholar under the "form and pressure" of the time of whose body we are a part. Thus sheltering myself in the shadow of a great name, my only wish is that what I say may be seen in his light, and be found not inconsistent with the spirit of his teaching.

The fulfillment of prophecy is not generally literal and Emerson's forecast offers no exception to this rule. It has ever been the fashion of oracles, from the time of the Sibyls and the Delphian tripod, to couch their deliverances darkly, and to prove themselves justified by the event in a fashion different from what was anticipated. But considered broadly, American scholarship has freed itself from the reproach of being "timid, imitative, and tame." It has done its part in the opening of new avenues of research, it has displayed qualities of marked originality, and it has grown bold in its self-reliance. In some of its manifestations it may be said to have bettered Emerson's instruction, and not to its advantage, for boldness may merge into recklessness, and impatience of restraint into lawlessness, while the desire to be original at all costs may lead to a wanton disregard for the example of other times and lands. Aversion to "the courtly muses of Europe" has sometimes driven us into a national chauvinism of empty self-conceit that Emerson would have been the last to countenance. But on the whole, we have no reason to be ashamed of our intellectual performance, for it has been widely varied, solid, and influential. Many of our younger scholars are equipped here at home with a training that means quite as much as any that the old world can give, many of our older scholars have acquired full citizenship in the cosmopolitan republic of learning. American scholarship has its own peculiar coloring, no doubt, for it is the reflection of American activities and aims, but it can hold its own in any company. If its accidents are not altogether what the most thoughtful might wish them to be, if the ideal of knowledge has crowded too closely on the ideal of culture, and the material has left the spiritual hard pressed for light and air, these are defects for the future to remedy, and to realize them that they may be remedied becomes one of the prime duties of the present day.

Every man is "a debtor to his profession," as Lord Bacon long ago

reminded us, and the educational profession is one that has special claims upon the American scholar. No matter what his department of work may be, he is bound to give his activity an educational turn, for this country, more fully perhaps than any other, accepts public education as one of the chief civic responsibilities. The great majority of our scholars are, indeed, and will long continue to be, engaged in the work of actual teaching, and those who are not so engaged, are usually in a position to exert a shaping influence upon our educational life. The complaint is often made that the advancement of learning suffers from this absorption in narrow educational tasks, and it would no doubt be desirable to free from that exaction a larger proportion of our scholarly energy than can now be devoted to research for its own sake. But it would be unfortunate indeed if scholarship should become wholly divorced from teaching, or if the duty to impart should not remain closely allied with the duty to investigate. The present time in this country is one of almost unexampled educational unrest, and more than ever before does it behoove the scholar to bring guidance to the forces at work, and to clarify the ferment. For, despite our generous public appropriations and our munificent private endowments for educational purposes, it is by no means true that all is roseate in this field of endeavor. There is still waste of the most wanton sort, and such misdirection of effort that a considerable share of the energy is dissipated. Particularly is this a time of reckless experimentation and of a confused sense of educational values. The old and tried disciplines, whose effectiveness has been tested by ages of experience, are now forced to contend for supremacy with all sorts of upstart matters. Reasoning, apparently, upon the analogy offered by the equality of individuals in a democracy, we are gravely bidden to accept a democratic system of education in which all subjects of study are held to be equivalent, and, to reduce the theory to its last absurdity, in which young people of all degrees of immaturity are encouraged to select their subjects according to their likings. The disciplinary aspect of education has in many quarters vanished clean out of sight, entertainment is offered in place of training, and the will, instead of being strengthened by the stimulation of its powers of resistance, is weakened by all sorts of concessions to the spirit of an easy-going self-indulgence. And all these evil things are done in the name of a sentimental pseudo-philosophy, with an imposing array of high-sounding terms at its command, whose pretensions are in reality as hollow as those of the veriest wind-bag giant of fairy lore. The peculiarly unfortunate feature of all this dallying with the new thing, this disregard of the accumulated wisdom of the generations, is that an incalculable amount of mischief may be done



before the common sense of the people is aroused sufficiently to call a halt. This lesson is likely to be learned only at the expense of a whole generation of luckless youngsters. Here, then, is a manifest duty of the American scholar toward his profession, to stand for a wise conservatism in educational theory and practice, to distrust all nostrums, and in the name of a sound psychology to expose and rebuke the mischievous tendencies of a pedagogy which is weakening the stamina of the new generation, and in which, while the teacher withers as an individual influence, the system is more and more.

In the higher ranges of his profession, and in those which more immediately concern his personal occupation, the scholar has no clearer duty than that of standing for "Lehrfreiheit" in the most absolute sense. He must teach the truth as he sees it, and he must join with his fellow scholars in the determination that by every means in their power this freedom shall be kept inviolate. This does not imply that all truths are fit for all seasons and places, but it does mean that no paltering with truth is permissible in the exercise of the sacred function of scholarship. When the occasion for plain speaking comes, as come it must upon many occasions in the scholar's life, he can admit no compromise with error, for the spirit of compromise is no other than Satan, as Henrik Ibsen vehemently reminds us, and a man may have commerce with it only at the peril of his soul's salvation. The great French scholar who died only a few months ago has formulated in impressive words what must be the fundamental creed of all his guild. It was in 1870 that Gaston Paris, in a lecture at the Collège de France, spoke these noble words:—"I profess absolutely and without reserve this doctrine that science has no other aim than truth, and truth for its own sake, without care of the consequences, good or ill, regrettable or happy, which that truth may have in practice. He, who, from a patriotic, religious, or even from a moral motive, allows himself in the facts that he is studying, in the conclusion that he draws, the smallest dissimulation, the slightest alteration, is not worthy of a place in the great laboratory to which truthfulness is a more indispensable claim to admission than skill. Thus understood, studies in common carried on in the same spirit in all civilized countries, form, above restricted, diverse, and often hostile nationalities, a great fatherland which no war soils, which no conqueror threatens, wherein souls find the refuge and the unity which the citadel of God gave them of old." It was Ernest Renan who asked that the words *Veritatem dilexi* should be graven upon his tombstone, and what nobler epitaph could any scholar wish than one that should inform passers-by that above all things else he delighted in the truth?

For he who stands by the truth in its hour of good and of ill repute alike steadfast to its banner, fights upon the winning side, and his personal defeat will only advance the triumph of his cause. As St. Augustine said, "It is a good thing for a man that truth should conquer him with his consent, since it is a bad thing for a man that truth should conquer him without his consent. For that truth conquer is necessary, whether he deny or confess." The proposition that truth must be served whatever the personal sacrifice becomes in its converse statement the proposition that falsehood must be combated whenever and wherever it raises its head. And on this aspect of the matter the words of the old theologian may be supplemented by the words of the modern philosopher. In all the writings of Schopenhauer there is no more impressive passage than the following: "It has often been said that we ought to follow truth even though no utility can be seen in it, because it may have indirect utility which may appear when it is least expected, and I would add to this, that we ought to be just as anxious to discover and to root out all error even when no harm is anticipated from it, because its mischief may be very indirect, and may suddenly appear when we do not expect it, for all error has poison at its heart. If it is mind, if it is knowledge, that makes man the lord of creation, there can be no such thing as harmless error, still less venerable and holy error. And for the consolation of those who in any way and at any time may have devoted strength and life to the noble and hard battle against error, I cannot refrain from adding that, so long as truth is absent, error will have free play, as owls and bats in the night; but sooner would we expect to see the owls and the bats drive back the sun in the eastern heavens, than that any truth which has once been known and distinctly and fully expressed, can ever again be so utterly vanquished and overcome that the old error shall once more reign undisturbed over its wide kingdom. This is the power of truth; its conquest is slow and laborious, but if once the victory be gained it can never be wrested back again."

The spirit of easy toleration of ills which a little resolution would remedy has given a distinctive stamp to the American character. As a people, we are inclined to put up with many forms of evil in the material, social, and intellectual spheres simply because their pressure has not grown intolerable. We fall too easily into a state of apathy and of complacent acceptance of things as they are, and our resentment is slow to be aroused. That it may be most effectively aroused at a critical juncture has been shown at many times in our history, and in this fact is the saving element of an otherwise dangerous tendency. Too often, however, the crisis past, we sink back into our sluggish mood, and our



life resumes the old round of indifference and self-delusion and folly. The lessons of experience are too quickly forgotten, and we are forced to learn over and over again under the sharp stress of impending disaster. In the sphere of thought, this spirit leads us to condone all sorts of lapses from intellectual integrity, and to sanction all sorts of pernicious mental practices. We gloss over a disagreeable situation with plausible phrases, and, while giving lip service to our ideals, ignore them in our actions. But that way lies hypocrisy, which of all the intellectual vices must ever be the ugliest to the earnest thinker. It infects our higher life at every point, and discredits our religion, our politics, and our social philosophy alike. Of all the prayers which we offer up for spiritual well-being, we should repeat most frequently and most fervently this prayer of Carlyle's: "May the Lord deliver us from all cant. May the Lord, whatever else he do or forbear, teach us to look facts honestly in the face, and to beware (with a kind of shudder) of smearing them all over with our despicable and damnable palavar, into unrecognizability, and so falsifying the Lord's own gospels to his unhappy blockheads of children, all struggling down to Gehenna and the everlasting swine's-trough for want of gospels."

It is a hard saying, albeit a racy one, this remark of Carlyle's about "the everlasting swine's-trough," but it characterizes an aspect of our civilization that cannot be ignored, and that should give us pause in our seasons of rejoicing and self-glorification. Even the gentle Emerson, in whose composition indignation was lacking, and the chief defect of whose philosophy is its failure to face the problem of evil, was driven to denounce "the vulgar prosperity that retrogrades ever to barbarism," and to declare, in the very address that has supplied a text for the present discourse, that "public and private avarice make the air we breathe thick and fat." If this were true two generations ago, with how much more of truth must the charge be made today, when in the minds of the great majority of our fellow countrymen material prosperity is the chief measure of worldly success. Do we not as a people frequently set before ourselves for examples the men who have accumulated stores of wealth rather than the men who have accumulated stores of wisdom? Do we not sometimes even acclaim them as our leaders, forgetful of Jethro's ancient counsel, "Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God,—men of truth, hating covetousness"? Here is surely an opportunity for the American scholar,—to protest not so much by his words as by his life against the prevailing commercial standards, to emphasize the dignity of his calling by showing himself calmly superior to the allurements that prove so dazzling to other men, to bring back to

us by the force of his example that ideal of plain living and high thinking which was once a potent force in our national life, but from which our civilization has in these later years so sadly lapsed. That scholar is unworthy of his high office who joins in the querulous complaint raised now and again to the effect that scholarship does not command material rewards proportional to those won by other forms of endeavor. Are its own peculiar rewards to count for nothing then,—its honors, its self-sufficing activities, its sense of the esteem in which it is held by all whose approval is really worth having? The true scholar, rejoicing in his work, and knowing it to be good, will reckon little of the prizes for which the vulgar strive; he will think of nothing less than of success in the worldly sense, as the free man, in Spinoza's immortal saying, "thinks of nothing less than of death."

The rising tide of that movement which in the political sphere we call socialism, but which has many other manifestations as well, and which threatens to subdue the brightly colored world to a uniform hue of sober gray, constitutes one of the most insidious present dangers to scholarship. In the name of a social ideal almost wholly materialistic, and under the protection of a narrow interpretation of the utilitarian philosophy, this movement is everywhere seeking to weaken individual initiative and thus clog the feet of progress. Emerson apprehended this danger, and commented upon it with a vehemence quite out of keeping with his wonted placidity. "Is it not the chief disgrace in the world," he said, "not to be an unit; not to be reckoned one character; not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred or thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong, and our opinion predicted geographically, as the North, or the South?" It was an unerring instinct which led Emerson to put his finger upon this tendency, and mark it as dangerous to civilization. I might quote similar words of warning from such different types of men as John Stuart Mill, Thomas Henry Huxley, and Henrik Ibsen. Huxley was the one who supplied us with a name for this tendency. He called it regimentation by way of contrasting it with individualism, and proceeded to analyze the history and theory of the two opposing systems in the sphere of governmental action. But it is a contrast which may be illustrated in the realm of thought no less than in that of action, and the scholar is quite as much concerned with it as the politician. In view of the ever increasing encroachments of the method of regimentation upon our modern life, it seems to me that the duty of the scholar is pronounced to take his stand in the defence of that individualism which was the core of Emerson's philosophy, yet avoiding



the extreme of intellectual anarchy to which an unrestrained acceptance of that view might lead, and admitting the helpfulness of concert wherever its aid may be invoked without harm to character or without clipping the wings of free thought.

Whatever the work that may engage his attention, the American scholar is bound by every sacred obligation to put ethical purpose into his effort, and to recognize the claims upon him of the society to which he belongs. He has no right to the self-indulgence of the recluse, and indifference to the public weal must be to him more than to other men a shame. No man is less entitled to escape from the press, to scan the follies of his fellows unconcerned, to say "a mad world, my masters," and hold himself aloof from its turmoil. For if it be a mad world, upon him chiefly devolves the responsibility for its conversion to sanity, and to shirk this responsibility is the great refusal for which there is no forgiveness. It may be, indeed, that the world will demand of him something more than clear thought and wise council, that duty may call upon to make the final sacrifice for the good of his fellow men. The sons of Harvard who fell in the struggle for the preservation of our American national life were in very truth what Lowell called them:—

"Her wisest scholars, those who understood  
The deeper teaching of her mystic tome,  
And offered their fresh lives to make it good."

This ideal of scholarship, its conception enlarged until it becomes coincident with citizenship, is nobly expressed in the inscription which occurs in a painting of the last judgment which adorns the great hall of the Ducal Palace in Venice. "Those are to be accounted wise who, by their own, avert their country's perils, for they render to the republic the honor which is its due, and would rather perish for, than with, many. For it is desperately wicked that we should treasure for ourselves the life which nature bestowed for our country's service; to surrender it at nature's demand, but refuse it when our country asks it. Wise, too, must they be accounted who shun no danger in their country's service. This is the price we are bound to pay for the dignity we enjoy in the republic, this the foundation of our liberty, this the wellspring of justice." In such stately terms was wisdom defined by the little island republic of the Adriatic; our own continental republic, its shores washed by two oceans, will hardly be able to better that instruction, or improve upon that ideal of devotion to the commonwealth.

In the familiar Pauline statement of the abiding elements in the Christian life, the chief emphasis is placed upon love, which is exalted

above both faith and hope in the hierarchy of the cardinal virtues. Having in view the needs of the person alone, of the individual soul aspiring toward the divine, this emphasis is justified, and two thousand years of Christian teaching have enforced the apostolic precept. But from our present standpoint, having in view the development of the race rather than of the individual, it would seem that faith were the foremost consideration. Faith, that is, not in a creed or a body of doctrine, but in the validity of every fine, altruistic impulse, of every generous motion of the spirit. A faith that derives its sustenance from the contemplation of earth and sea and sky, from the forms of beauty created by architects and painters and musicians, from the inspired utterances of sages and prophets and poets. A faith that is proof against all frustrations and disappointments and disillusionments because it views all temporal phenomena under the species of eternity. A faith in the perfectibility of mankind which can turn, like that of Tennyson, from the most unflinching envisagement of present-day evils,—from “the passions of the primal clan,” from wisdom pilloried in the market-place, from the menace and the madness of a degenerate age,—turn serenely and with undimmed vision from all the disheartening spectacle to man as he may yet become when the æons “touch him into shape”:—

“All about him shadow still, but, while the races flower and fade,  
 Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on the shade,  
 Till the peoples all are one, and all their voices blend in choric  
 Hallelujah to the Maker, ‘It is finished. Man is made!’”

It is a faith of this fervent and invincible type that shines out in some of the darkest hours of modern history, and enshrines for us the memory of the men who have held it fast. Examples from the poets and seers of the modern world might be multiplied indefinitely, but I choose rather to direct attention to men who have been both thinkers and doers, to men who have been scholars in Emerson’s sense, if not also in the narrower and more exacting sense of the term. First of all, there is the familiar passage from Condorcet’s “*Progrès de l’Esprit Humain*.” “How this picture of the human race freed from all its fetters, withdrawn from the empire of chance, as from that of the enemies of progress, and walking with firm and assured step in the way of truth, of virtue, and happiness, presents to the philosopher a sight that consoles him for the errors, the crimes, the injustice, with which the earth is yet stained, and of which he is not seldom the victim! It is in the contemplation of this picture that he receives the reward of his efforts for the progress of reason, for the defence of liberty. He ventures to link them with the



eternal chain of the destinies of man. It is there that he finds the true recompense of virtue, the pleasure of having done a lasting good. Fate can no longer undo it by any disastrous compensation that shall restore prejudice and bondage. This contemplation is for him a refuge, into which the recollection of his persecutors can never follow him; in which, living in thought with man reinstated in the rights and the dignity of his nature, he forgets man tormented and corrupted by greed, by base fear, by envy; it is here that he truly abides with his fellows, in an elysium that his reason has known how to create for itself, and that his love for humanity adorns with all purest delights." These words, as Mr. Morley points out in telling phrase, were "written by a man at the very close of his days, when every hope that he had ever cherished seemed to one without the eye of faith to be extinguished in bloodshed, disorder, and barbarism." An equally sublime faith was voiced by Mazzini at a time when the spirit of Italian liberty seemed well nigh extinct, and when to prophecy its rebirth was like preaching the resurrection of the dead to an unbelieving generation; "Faith and the Future" was his theme, and in eloquent terms he proclaimed that faith should once more be restored to its throne in the minds of men, and the future made fair. "And then," he went on to say, "made fruitful by the breath of God and of holy beliefs, poetry, now exiled from a world that is a prey to anarchy, will blossom yet again; poetry, the flower of the angels, that martyrs' blood and mothers' tears have fed, that oft will grow amid ruins, but is ever colored by a rising sun. It speaks to us in prophetic tones, of humanity, European in substance, national in form. It will teach the Fatherland of the Fatherlands to the nations still divided; it will translate into Art the religious, social philosophy, it will surround with its own beautiful light, woman, who, though a fallen angel, is ever nearer to heaven than we. It will hasten her redemption, restoring to her the mission of inspiration, of pity, and of prayer, which Christianity divinely symbolized in Mary. It will sing the joys of martyrdom, the immortality of the vanquished, the tears that expiate, the sufferings that purify, the memories and the hopes, the traditions of one world interwoven in the cradle of another,—and it will teach the young the greatness of self-sacrifice, the virtue of constancy and silence, how to be alone and yet despair not, how to endure without a cry an existence of torments half understood, unknown, long years of delusions and bitterness and wounds, all without a complaint, it will teach a belief in future things, an hourly travail to promote it, without a hope in this life of seeing its victory." It was a faith of this type, bound up with a passionate patriotism, that filled the soul of James Darmesteter, a scholar in the fullest sense, yet

also a dreamer, whose life was cut off in his early prime. This vision of France as she stood revealed to him in the light of history, is taken from the tribute paid to his memory by the English poet whom he had made his wife. "The profound determination of France not to die, not to fall from her proud estate, not only to have like other nations her share of sunlit life, but to remain, in the future as in the past, one of the guiding forces of humanity, continued to be the infallible motive power that impelled her, straightforward and upright, along the strange paths in which she was drawn by her blind guides. Thus, from those pygmy conflicts in which she seemed resigned to let her light die out, there arose an eternal France, a France of today and of tomorrow, made up of her clear sky and her fertile soil, of her wealth amassed in toil, in glory, and in pursuit of the ideal, by sixty generations of laborers, scholars, and thinkers, of the gleam of her sword and the echo of her word, borne as far as mankind exists. That is a heritage not to be destroyed by six months of defeat and twenty years of fever, that the inheritor himself may neither reject nor squander, for the heritage constrains the inheritor, however he may be disappointed or in whatever manner he may deal with it, even were he the sovereign people. That is the immanent France of which our foolish and shifting agitations are but fugitive phases without lasting effect; the sole great and durable reality, invisible yet ever present, present in every Frenchman, in those who deny their country and in those who proclaim her, toward which all faces are turned in the hour of anguish." These three illustrations of the fortitude of soul that faith in the future alone can give, have for their common factor an unwavering confidence in the ultimate triumph of right over wrong and of light over darkness. Each of them in its own way, and with its own individual accent, points to a future humanity upheld by what Henrik Ibsen calls the true pillars of society, the twin pillars of truth and justice.

It is the highest duty of the American scholar in our new century to uphold, not merely the faith in humanity to which these voices have borne testimony, but also the special faith that to our own nation has been given the mission to lead the world toward a true conception of the fellowship of man, that the new world has, indeed, been divinely appointed "to redress the balance of the old." That democracy must in the end prevail in the societies of human beings who are worthy to be called men, was held to be truth unquestionable by the Fathers of the Republic, and whatever strength has hitherto nerved us in the great crises of our national life has been born of that belief,—our splendid heritage from those who have gone before us and whose example we are fain to



emulate. In our own day, that belief has found no lack of advocates, and among them we hold in most grateful remembrance that fine flower of American scholarship and American manhood whose Birmingham address on "Democracy" offers the most persuasive and convincing modern exposition of our political gospel. James Russell Lowell seems, indeed, to have been the ideal American scholar of Emerson's prophecy. Singularly receptive to the benign ministries of nature, he was also at home in the world of books, yet he never allowed books to usurp for him the claims of life. And when the pressure of events called upon him to act, he stepped buoyantly into the arena, and bore his share of the brunt of the conflict. He held, moreover, that the duties of scholarship were paramount to its privileges, and shirked no task that was set him to perform, cast aside no burden that was laid upon his shoulders. And to all his life-activity he brought the moral fervor that had come down to him from the generations of his Puritan ancestry, and nursed the fire of his indignation until it became a devouring flame upon all those who sought selfish aims at the expense of the commonwealth. How we have missed him during these dark recent days, when democracy has been so sorely wounded in the house of her friends! How we have longed to hear his voice raised to rebuke the miserable evasions and concealments and palterings with truth that have prevailed in our public councils of late! How we have felt the need of his moral authority to reclaim us from recreancy to our national ideals, from desertion of the fundamental principles upon which is based whatever we have achieved of true greatness, from the casting loose of the very moorings of the Republic! For it must be confessed that democracy is undergoing a severer strain than was ever before imposed upon it, and it takes a stout faith not to quail under this trial. The horizon of our new century is not, like that of its predecessor, arched by the rainbow of promise after the storm of revolution, but is obscured by miasmatic vapors and sullen exhalations wherein lurk the dragons of greed and brutality and sordid materialism. Instead of sweeping to their fulfilment, the hopes of a hundred years ago have grown sluggish in their flight, their pinions wearied, their anticipated goal withdrawn into the dim, uncertain distance. When the youthful poets of today shall have grown to maturity, they will hardly say of this age what Wordsworth could say of the earlier one,

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven."

They will rather, if they have kept their idealism clean from the con-

tagion that now through so many insidious channels seems to pollute the springs of spiritual health, turn to the past more for chastening than for inspiration, determined that, as far as in them lies, its weaknesses and insensate follies shall not be those of the coming years.

And in this there is perhaps a gain. For the past is past, and there is no undoing it. The old Tent-Maker of Naishapur was impelled by this solemn consideration to one of his most impressive sayings:—

“The Moving Finger writes, and, having writ,  
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.”

But the future still remains to be shaped by man's resolution, and “the eternal years of God” belong to truth and righteousness. He who holds fast to this belief has indeed “the faith that makes faithful,” and for him the spectres of the dead ages can possess no terrors. The most effective worker for man's advancement is not he who blinks the evils that confront him in the actual world, and takes refuge in some fool's paradise of the imagination, but he who faces them with open eyes and undaunted courage. Evils there are always and everywhere; I have not hesitated to express the belief that they are crowding upon us here and now as if marshaled for one desperate and decisive

“Battle in the West,  
Where all of high and holy dies away.”

Yet I would fain that my closing word were one not of admonition, but of cheer, and that word may fitly be taken from the poet of the stout heart whose ringing summons has come to many a soul in the hour of need, and strengthened it for renewed endeavor. Robert Browning's last message to mankind teaches a lesson from which the poorest spirited may gain strength and courage. It would not be easy to find a more inspiring example for the conduct of life than is offered by the poet's description of himself as

“One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,  
Never doubted clouds would break,  
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.”

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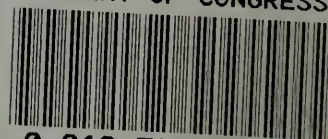
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